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T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

8 December 1966

THE PROBLEM: What do we believe the Soviet reaction to deployment of the NIKE-X would be?

1. Uncertainty of prediction:

a. caution that it is very difficult to predict with any certainty.

b. Soviets certainly have considered likelihood of US ABM deployment in their military planning.

c. US decision to deploy would probably influence Soviet policy because of its potential impact on the strategic balance.

d. Specific Soviet responses will be conditional by variety of strategic, technical, economic considerations.

2. Soviet strategic posture as we see it:

a. Strategic attack -- building ICBMs more rapidly; by 1968 they should have more credible deterrent because of greater assured destruction capability; beyond 1968, Soviet course will depend in

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part on US programs; they may level off, or they may try to match our ICBM force; either way, we can expect Soviet systems with greater survivability and striking effectiveness.

b. Strategic defense -- the picture is not as clear as above; we know the Moscow ABM system was started at least four years ago and should be operational in a year or so; we are not sure whether the Tallinn system is a SAM or ABM defense; implications of my view (SAM) are that they are unlikely to have ABM defenses outside Moscow until early 1970's; Gen. Carrol's view (ABM) implies Soviets well along in building ABM defenses, however limited in effectiveness, either way, Soviets will seek to develop improved ABM capabilities, adjusting their program on basis of several factors, including the US reaction. In general, their reactions would be less marked if the DIA view is correct and the Soviets in fact are several years down the raod to expanded ABM deployment.

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3. Soviet Policy, Attitudes and Economic Constraints:

a. Soviet impasse: Soviet foreign policy faces a varrier to its expansion by means of military strength; ideologically, Moscow's foreign policy cannot be passive, defensive, conservative, or they lose their charter.

b. Economic/military facts of life have forced them on the defensive against an alerted US with its 3 to 1 superiority in GNP and the same or more superiority in the strategic attack ration.

c. Distrust: the Soviets have a dread that we might anticipate Soviet aggression with a preventive blow; this is a reflective factor whose origin lies in Moscow, not in the outside world; yet it plays a large role in justifying huge Soviet military expenditures which, in turn, depress living standards; events since Feb. 1965 in Vietnam have deepened Soviet fears and suspicions ; for first time since Korea we are militarily engaged with a Communist state.

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d. Recent evidence indicates Five Year Plan is being implemented on piecemeal basis and final decisions on 1967 allocations will not be made till late spring; Plan may already be in trouble because of tough issue of civilian vs. military claims, as well as competition among military sectors.

4. Soviet interpretation of our decision to deploy NIKE-X:

a. They probably feel they have a credible deterrent now and they want to keep it at least that good.

b. They would view any US ABM program as a move to reduce Soviet assured destruction capabilities and thus an upset to the presetn strategic balance.

c. They would react to the US move.

d. We believe the Soviets would be more influenced by the decision itself than the dize of the US program.

e. They would likely see the US decision as commitment to a continuation of the arms race to even higher levels, with the consequent setback to arms control possibilities.

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f. Interests within the Soviet bureaucracy which press for larger programs would carry greater weight.

5. Factors bearing on the Soviet military view:

In considering what specific military responses the Soviets may make to our deployment of ABM defenses, we take into account some key aspects about the strategic situation as we believe it looks from Moscow:

a. First, in making their calculations about the present and future relation of forces, the Soviets will tend to give the US the benefit of the doubt whenever they are faced with uncertainty about such things as the effectiveness of US or Soviet weapon systems -- that is, while we worry about their strengths and our vulnerabilities, they worry about our strengths and their vulnerabilities.

b. Second, the Soviets are deterred from deliberately attacking the US by the power of our strategic attack forces, to visit unacceptable damage on their country in retaliation, and their

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criterion of unacceptable damage is probably much more stringent than the one we use in our calculations -- that is, the loss of Moscow alone or Moscow plus a very few other principal cities may well represent unacceptable damage as they see it.

c. Third, the Soviets have long seen themselves faced with a large, diversified, and steadily-improving strategic attack force, and a major feature of their response has been straight forward strategic defense measures -- that is, they have a predilection for what the US terms damage-limiting capabilities, whereas our strategy has concentrated mainly on assured destruction capabilities.

d. Fourth, in the past year or so the Soviets have the very rapid deployment of hardened and dispersed ICBMs, the bulk of which are useful mainly as city-busters -- that is, they have recently embarked on an intensive program to acquire an assured destruction capability, and in this field they now probably regard themselves as catching up.

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6. Soviet military options in reaction to US deployment:

a. Respond by continuing to build a still larger ICBM And SLBM force, approaching the high side of our ICBM estimate for the period beyond 1968.

b. Develop sophisticated reentry vehicles and penetration aids.

c. Complicate US ABM defense by intensifying development of depressed trajectory ICBMs and fractional orbit bombardment systems.

d. Enlarge their own ABM program.

e. Our best judgment: Cost will be an important consideration in the Soviet decision regarding the above options; improving their strategic attack capability would be far cheaper than the very great cost for a full-scale Soviet ABM deployment. Soviets have same strategic requirement as US: necessity to retain an assured destruction capability in spite of what the other side does. We therefore believe the most likely Soviet reaction would be whatever combination of options (a), (b), and (c) above they judge

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necessary to offset our acquisition of damage limiting capability and thus to attempt to restore the strategic status quo ante.

7. Overall impact on US-Soviet relations:

a. In general, the US deployment would tend to contribute to suspicion and tension between Moscow and Washington.

b. The US move and Soviet reaction would probably postpone the chances for meaningful detente until well into the future.

c. Neither side would gain in the strategic balance; it would only restore an eventual mutual deterrence at a higher, more costly plateau that would probably be equally unpopular in both countries.

d. It might reinforce the weakened ideological base on which Soviet foreign policy now rests.

e. In the propaganda field, the Soviets almost certainly would charge the US with reducing the prospects for disarmament, and probably would accuse the US of seeking to increase its capabilities for nuclear war. Over the longer term, however, the Soviets probably

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would stress two propaganda lines: one, that the concept of "Fortress America" was again gaining ascendancy in the US; the other, that Soviet missile defenses were superior to those of the US, and that the latter could not cope with a Soviet strategic missile attack.

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